

## AN AFRICAN DIPNOID FISH.

*(Protopterus annectens.)*

By ANDREW HALKETT.

In an issue of the *Fishing Gazette*<sup>1</sup> a paragraph appeared under the title, "Digging for Fish," of which the following is the substance :

"The natives of Kottiar, in Africa, are in the habit of digging every year, in the summer, the dry banks of the Vergel River for fish, which they dig out by hundreds, just as they would potatoes. The mud lumps are broken open, and the fish, perhaps eight or ten inches long, will always be found alive, and often frisky, as if just removed from its supposedly native element—the water. In the dry beds of several African rivers a similar practice is often pursued. A kind of mud fish buries itself while the bottom is still moist, and remains there all the summer, waking up when the rains begin again."

Preceding this paragraph were words to the effect that the above was "a new fish story," a bait, in fact, "to lure the unwary summer boarder to the swamps and sandhills of Suffolk County." But knowing better, I wrote to the editor of the *Gazette* corroborating the fact of the existence, during the dry season, of living fishes encased in capsules of mud awaiting the return of the rainy season when the pools and rivers are refilled with water. He published my letter<sup>2</sup> under the title, "The Dark Continent Fish," and the following quotation in full is its import :

"In regard to the 'new fish' 'credited to the Dark Continent' which appeared in your issue of January 7, under the title of 'Digging for Fish,' permit me the following space in your columns concerning a very remarkable group of fishes.

"These are the Dipnoids, distinguished from others by the possession of a rudimentary lung in addition to the ordinary gills. This lung is simply a modification of the air-bladder. The group contains four<sup>3</sup> existing species, and several extinct ones. The names of the existing species are these :

"*Lepidosiren paradoxa*, a very rare fish of the River Amazon.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Fishing Gazette* [203 Broadway, N. Y.] Saturday, Jan. 7, 1899.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, Saturday, Feb. 4, 1899, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> During my visit in Great Britain I learned of a fifth (a recently discovered) Dipnoid, but am not yet in possession of any particulars about it.

<sup>4</sup> "*Lepidosiren* has recently been found in abundance in swampy localities of the Chaco, Paraguay." Guide to the Galleries of Reptiles and Fishes, British Museum, 1898.